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**RELATIONSHIPS OF THE CHITIMACHAN
LINGUISTIC FAMILY**

by

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RELATIONSHIPS OF THE CHITIMACHAN LINGUISTIC FAMILY.

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The Chitimachan linguistic family was established by Powell in his "Indian Linguistic Families"¹ to accommodate but one language, that of the Chitimacha indians of lower Louisiana. The language remains almost unstudied. Its primitive home was around Grand Lake in Louisiana, but was spoken in the vicinity of Vermillion Bay, Atchafalya Bay, and eastward to the country of the Okelousa, Bayogula, Washa and Chawasha, Muskogean peoples on the west bank of the Mississippi.²

In historic times the immediate neighbors of the Chitimacha have been on the east the above mentioned Muskogean tribes speaking languages similar to the Choctaw; on the west the Attacapa (believed to be a distinct stock); and on the north the Okelousa and Hooma (Muskogean), with the Natchez further up the Mississippi. Undoubtedly bands of Adai and other Caddoan tribes also came in contact with the Chitimacha³. The relationship existing between these peoples and the Chitimacha has never been close, and, with the exception of the Natchez, they seem to have no ethnic connection with them whatever. The legends, customs and organization of the Natchez and Chitimacha are very similar. This strongly confirms the linguistic similarity in suggesting as probable a divergent descent from a parent tribe. I will discuss the chief points of similarity after treating of the language.⁴

¹ In "Seventh Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology," Wash., 1891.

² For synonyms and brief account see "Handbook of American Indians," Vol. I.

³ For general discussion see Gatshet "Creek Migration Legions," Vol. I.

⁴ For ethnology of Chitimacha see Brinton in Trans. Anthropological Soc. of Washington, D. C., Vol II, and Swanton "Indian Tribes of the Lower Miss."

In 1706 the Chitimacha came into definite contact with the French near New Orleans. They have not played a conspicuous part in history, which fact may in part account for our lack of early information concerning their ethnology and language. They have always been considered a distinct stock and no attempt has ever been made to prove them even distantly connected with any other tribe.⁵

The first material recorded was a vocabulary collected by a man named Murray.⁶ In the early part of the nineteenth century this manuscript came into the hands of Martin Duralde, who was commandant of the posts of Opelousas and Attacapa (now Franklin, La.). Duralde later added the vocabulary to his word-list of the Attacapa and to a manuscript account of the mythology of the Chitimacha that he, or some earlier observer, had collected. Two copies of this later compilation are known to have been made. The one retained by the author was discovered about 1848 near Opelousas, La. Portions had been partly destroyed by mice. The fate of the imperfect copy is not known, but a translation of it was made and is now in the Bureau of Ethnology. According to the original manuscript it was "a letter written to Sir William Dunbar respecting some of the curiosities of the country to be communicated to La Société du Nord." This is of course the William Dunbar who settled at Natchez and explored the Black and Wachita rivers for the Government, while "La Société du Nord" is probably the American Philosophical Society. Dunbar is believed to have given his copy to Dr. Sibley, who deposited it with the above named society, or gave it to Thomas Jefferson, who later deposited it with the society. The copy is fortunately complete.

The linguistic material in this letter was published in part by Vater in his "Analekten der Sprachenkunde," Leipzig, 1821. It was later printed by Gallatin in his comparative vocabularies published in the "Archaeologia Americana," Vol. II, 1836. No

⁵ For early history see Swanton "Indian Tribes," pp. 337-344.

⁶ Part printed in Balbi, A. "Atlas ethnographique," Paris, 1826.

other linguistic material is known to have been taken⁷ until Gatschet visited the tribe in 1881-82 and "collected an abundance of linguistic material . . . including several texts" for the Bureau of Ethnology. This material has not been published and may not be made available in the immediate future. The next material collected was in 1906, when Dr. John R. Swanton, also of the Bureau of Ethnology, visited the thirty-five or more surviving Chitimacha at Charenton, La. He collected several myths and personal names. In his "Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi"⁸ he gives the myths in English and the original of the personal and other names. No other material has been collected, nor has any other since appeared.

In this paper I present the problem of the Chitimacha relationships and the results of my attempt to elucidate it based on an examination of the language and ethnology of the tribe. Conclusions drawn from our present material must of necessity be only tentative, though I believe the following will prove suggestive and may stimulate to a fuller investigation. The history of the paper is as follows: In 1908 I became interested in the Choctaw language and those adjacent to it. The Natchez was then treated as a separate stock on the authority of Brinton⁹ and Powell¹⁰ following Gatschet. My Choctaw and Creek informants were certain that the Natchez spoke an alien language, although an adopted people. While Brinton had noted forty terms similar in Natchez and Muskhogean languages, neither his work nor that of other writers¹¹ suggested their probable relationship. Noting the migration legends and close ethnographic similarity of the Chitimacha to the Natchez, I believed that by comparing their languages I could obtain additional evidence to prove them ethnically related. With this end in view I compared those Natchez words not loan words from other

⁷ For early bibliography see Vater, "Littertur der Grammatiken," Berlin, 1847.

⁸ Swanson, John R., "Bul. 43 Bureau of Am. Eth.," Wash., 1911.

⁹ In Proceed. of Amer. Philosophical Soc., Vol. XIII, 1873, and "The American Race," N. Y., 1891, p. 90.

¹⁰ In "Seventh Annual Rep. of the Bureau of Amer. Ethnology," Wash., 1891.

¹¹ Cushing in his "History of the Choctaw, Chickasaw and Natchez Indians," 1899, does not imply a racial connection of the latter with the former.

languages and those Chitimacha words that were not evidently from other sources. Of the remaining words fully *thirty per cent.* showed similarity with the corresponding words in Natchez. These similarities were the most characteristic words of a language. Considering that the admittedly closely related Muskoki and Choctaw show a similarity in only about a half of their words it seemed that so large an incidence of corresponding words confirmed the conclusions I had reached from other sources. Shortly after that I saw Dr. Swanton's preliminary paper¹² on the Natchez in which he tentatively suggests their Muskhogean relationship. Press of other work kept me from utilizing my material for publication. In a subsequent work Swanton (writing of the Natchez) remarks:¹³ "Some unexpected resemblances to Chitimacha have developed from the preliminary examination, but in general it may be said that the writer's opinion that the Natchez is the result of a mixture of Muskhogean and a non-Muskhogean people appears to be strongly confirmed." Finding my conclusions confirmed led me to examine my increased material with the results given below.

LANGUAGE.

Method.—I made a dictionary of the 84 Chitimacha words in Swanton's "Indian Tribes" and to them added 143 words from the vocabulary of Duralde¹⁴. I incorporated in the dictionary 256 Natchez words, or all available. I then reduced the whole to a common alphabet. From the dictionary I removed the Chitimacha or Natchez words of extraneous origin.

I next studied the phonetic principles of the Chitimacha, and then the Natchez, later comparing the separate findings. I then compared the identical words (as given by the vocabularies) of the two languages for lexical similarity. When not successful I compared with synonyms or words of an analogous root. It is obvious that names of objects recently introduced into the

¹² "Ethnological Position of the Natchez Indians," *American Anthropologist*, N. S. Vol. 9, 1907, pp. 513-528.

¹³ "Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley," p. 365.

¹⁴ Gallatin in "Trans. American Antiquarian Soc.." Vol. II, 1836, pp. 305-67.

Indian economy have no philological value as two related languages may derive a new term from roots of different signification.

Phonetis.—The languages formerly spoken south of Tennessee and east of Louisiana lack the sounds R (*), Z, ZH, V. TH, and DTH. Of these neither the Chitimacha nor Natchez are exceptions. The Chitimacha alphabet may be represented as follows, giving the letters their English value:

Vowels.....	OO	O	AH	A**	AY	EE	(AI)
Semivowels .		.	W		Y		
	Labial			Lingual		Palatal	
Nasals	M			N		NG	
Aspirates....						H	
Sibilants—							
Sonant....							
Surd.....				S		SH	
Spirants—							
Sonant....						GH (Arabic)	
Surd.....						CH (German)	
Mutes—							
Sonant....						G	
Surd.....	P			T		K	

The phonetic system nearest related to that of the Chitimacha is the Natchez. The latter varying from Chitimacha only by the introduction of L and a final F. Chitimacha phonetics varies markedly from the Attacapa. The latter is more sonant and introduces B, D, F, L, and the diphthong AU; it lacks Y, and AI and M rarely occurs. The difference between the Chitimacha alphabet and the Adai is also marked. The latter introduces L and R and CH; it lacks Y, the palatal aspirants and P occurs rarely. The other Caddoan languages differ by the characteristic frequency of K and R. The differences between the Chitimacha

* Excepting the Koroa and the Timacua.

* * As in *what*, *not*, German *man*.

and Natchez from the Muskogean languages can best be shown by comparing the Chitimacha-Natchez alphabet with the following:

Choctaw-Alibamu			Creek-Hitchiti		
Vowels—					
OO, O, EH, AH, AY, EE, (AI, AU)			OO, O, EH, AH, AY, EE		
Vowels Nasalized—					
OO(N), O(N), A(N), EE(N)					
Semivowels—					
W	L	Y	W	L	Y
Labials	Linguals	Palatals	Labials	Linguals	Palatals
Nasals ... M	N		M	N	
Aspirates.	HL or 'L	H		HL or 'L	H
Sibilants—					
Sonant..					
Surd....	S	CH, SH		S	CH, SH
Spirants—					
Sonant..					
Surd.... F			F		
Mutes—					
Sonant.. B				D	G
Surd.... P	T	K	P	T	K

The relative frequency of the various sounds in the several languages is as follows:

Chitimacha.—Of 100 words taken at random the vowels comprised 37% of the sounds. The relative frequency out of 150 vowels was A 38%, EE 28.5%, OO 17%, AY 10% and O (mostly initial 7.5%). The consonants were distributed as follows, T 18%, SH 18%, N 18%, K 16%, P 9%, S 8.5%, M 5%, H (mostly initial) 5%. Thus it will be seen that the language is neither pronouncedly vocalic nor consonantal and that it is almost entirely lingual (45%) and palatal (40%). The mute-sibilant ratio is about 3:2.

Natchez.—Of 100 words taken at random the vowels comprised 38.5% of the sounds. Their relative frequency was A 38%, EE 28.5%, OO 17%, O 12.5%, and AY 6%. The consonants were divided as follows: T 18%, K 17%, N 13%, SH 12%, P 10%, S 10%, M 3%, H 3%. It will be seen that the vowel-consonant ratio is almost identical in Natchez as in Chitimacha; also the vowel partition is the same except for the replacement of O and AY. Natchez shows a slightly larger proportion of labials than Chitimacha. It, too, is largely lingual and (41%) and palatal (32%). There is a relative increase of mutes over sibilants, the ratio being 2:1. Some of the above differences between Chitimacha and Natchez may be due to Muskogean influence on the latter.

Attacapa.—Of 75 words taken at random the vowels comprise 42.5% of the sounds. Their relative frequency was AH 33%, EE 25%, AY 17%, OO 12%, O 8%. The consonants are divided as follows: T 20%, G 13.3%, K 11.7%, N 11.6%, L 8.9%, SH 8.9%, D 5.8%, H 5.7%. The linguals comprise 49% of the consonants and the palatals 39.6%. The mute-sibilant ratio is 5:2. The language is more sonant than the preceding ones.

Adai.—Of 75 words taken at random the vowels comprised 43% of the sounds. Their relative frequency was: AH 49.3%, AY 17.1%, O 12.3%, EE 11.4%, OO 9%. The consonants are divided as follows: K 21.3%, T 18.%, N 18%, S 11.%, L 6.%, CH 5.%, W 4%.

Choctaw.—The vowels comprise 50.% of the sounds. They are proportioned as follows: AH 34.6%, EE 29.4%, O 16%, EH 9.%, AY 4.5%. The consonants are divided as follows: K 21.6%, N 14.9%, T 11.3%, L 11.2%, H 8.%, CH 6.2%, M 6.2%, P 4.8%, Y 4.5%, B 4.3%, SH 3.5%, F 3.5%. Choctaw is more labial than any of the other languages and also differs in being more palatal (40.%) than lingual (28.%). It is also not so sibilant, the mute-sibilant ratio being 4:1.

Creek.—The vowels comprise 49.% of the sounds in fifty words taken at random. They are divided as follows: AH 43.3%, EE 32.3%, O 14.1%, EU 8.6%. The consonant partition is: K 19.5%, N 13.9%, T 13.9%, S 9.%, M 8.9%, D 8.%, L

5.9%, F 4.5%, P 4.5%, SH 2.9%, H 2.2%. The frequency of labials (18.%), palatals (44.%) and linguals (28.6%) is nearly that of Choctaw. The mute-sibilant ratio is not quite as high as Choctaw, being 3:1.

Conclusions.—The Chitimacha and Natchez are almost the same in their vowel index and the relative frequency of the several vowels. Adai differs markedly from Chitimacha by the prominence it gives AH. It and Attacapa give more importance to AY than OO. On the other hand, the Muskogean languages vary less, but give prominence to O at the expense of OO. Natchez and Chitimacha are characterized by the prominence of T, N, SH, and K, with P, S, M, and H less frequent. The other languages have K more prominent than N. In the Muskogean languages T is not so prominent, and SH is not prominent in any, while S is absent from all except Adai. In all but Chitimacha and Natchez P is either absent or reduced to half its frequency, and all introduce L, Attacapa G and D, Adai CH and W, and the Muskogean languages CH, Y, B and F. The Muskogean languages are more vocalic and labial than either Chitimacha or Natchez; they are also less sibilant and the palatals are more frequent than the linguals (i. e. opposite to the custom in Chitimacha and Natchez.)

SYLLABIFICATION.—In determining the general nature of the words and their component syllables I used large series of common words picked at random, excluding only a few Natchez words probably Muskogean in origin.

The monosyllable-polysyllable ratio is nearly the same in Chitimacha, where it is 26:180, and Natchez, where it is 25:180. In Adai it is only 3:180, and in Choctaw only 2:180. On the other hand, in Attacapa over half the common words are monosyllables. Both Chitimacha and Natchez have an average of 2.5 syllables to a word, while in Adai the Polysyllabous words have an average length of 2.65 syllables. In Choctaw and Muskogean the average length is 2.75 syllables, and in Attacapa not much over 2. syllables to a word. The initial syllables in both Chitimacha and Natchez are preponderatingly consonant-vowel and consonant-vowel-consonant syllables, while initial vowel and

vowel-consonant syllables are rare. Also characteristic in the two languages are the final syllables which in about two-fifths of the words are consonant-vowel-consonant syllables and in the remainder consonant-vowel syllables. Chitimacha also has the consonant-vowel-double consonant syllable occurring occasionally either initially or finally. In Choctaw and Muskoki the initial vowel and vowel-consonant syllables are over six times more frequent than in Chitimacha or Natchez, in other words, one-third of all their words begin with a vowel. Extended study failed to show any especial vowel or consonant associations that seemed to be characteristic of any two of the languages already mentioned. Such as occurred was due to the different frequency of certain vowels and consonants in the several languages, which is given above.

LEXICOGRAPHY.—My material offered me 134 common words to be found in both the Chitimacha and Natchez vocabularies. Of these 17 Chitimacha words were ruled out as unquestionably borrowed from other languages (9 from Attacapa, 6 from Adai, 1 from Choctaw, and 1 from Creek). I then ruled out 24 words from the Natchez as borrowed from other languages (12 from Creek and Choctaw, 5 from Caddoan, 4 from Cherokee, 2 from Uchee, or Tunica, and one from Attacapa). Of the remaining 93 words 36 (38.7%) showed more or less similarity between the Chitimacha and Natchez equivalents.

The chitimacha words borrowed from other languages are as follows: From Attacapa, girl, brother, hail, light, grass, earth or land, river, ten, and lake; from Adai, man, husband, boy, finger, snake, and maize; from Choctaw, meat; and from Creek, one.

The following are the thirty-six Chitimacha words more or less similar to Natchez equivalents. The phonetic transcription is given in English consonants and continental vowels; v is the u heard in tub; c is the sh in should; (e) is a barely audible eh; (n) a French nasal.

<i>Word</i>	<i>Chitimacha</i>	<i>Natchez</i>	<i>Point of Similarity</i>
mother	hail	kwa(i)l	(kw)hail
friend	keta	keta	keta
warrior	na(e)ce	na(e)kce	na(e)kce
nose	cic	camatc	ca(ma)tc
tooth	hi(n)	entv (pl.)	hen
arm	unac	ic	nac
leg	so	etwentsev	(etwent)sev
house	hanan	hahit	ha(n)ha(n)it
town	namu	tam (people)	tam(u)
day	wacta	wetv	wata
night	timan	tuwa	tiwa(n)
sky, heavens	kahieketa	nasuk(e)ta	keta
sun	t' iaha	kwahsep	k(i)wa(sep)
water	ko	kuhn	ko(n)
snow	kaya	kowiyv	ko-ya
rain	nastepec	nasnayobik	nas-pik
tree	konc	tcu	tcu(n)
wood	konc(ap)	tcutop	tcu(tc)ap
oak	katnec	tsoklekep	(tso)katnek(ep)
tobacco	hacux (an herb)	hak(au)	hak(au)
bird	t'ia	tsoka	tsi(k)a
deer	(kam)nitc(e)	tza, tza	(ni)tza
wolf	kanikice	henhvskus	kanhiskuce
cold	kastek	tsitakopana	kasitako(pana)
great	hatkip	lehip	kip
blue	katinec	ha-ahsep	ha(ti)nahc(ep)
black	kups (black paint)	ka-astcel	ka(p)tc(el)
I	utececa	tugeha	tekeha
three	kahiti	nayeti	nahiti
four	meccant	tanweti	(me)tan(we)ti
five	haspe (hand)	espehsev (hand)	and spede (five)
seven	miceta	u(n)hkww	Nat. root weti
eight	kueta	vpkvtepes	kueta
nine	kniceta	wetepkwutepes	Nat. root weti
eleven	hougo patnic	oguwetan kouse	ougopatnic
hundred	pup	pup	pup

It will thus be seen that many of the fundamental words show root similarity; and there is similarity between certain prefixes and suffixes, as well as grammatical processes. I regret that the limited material at my disposal does not present more examples of the use of particals and of morphological processes, which are of more value than substantive roots. The findings of Swanton incline me to believe, however, that they would prove to be even more conclusive. On further study some of the above examples probably will be found to be invalid, but others (perhaps proportionately more) will be found to take their place. I do not, of course, consider a limited linguistic evidence as given above usually sufficient to prove a relationship between two languages. One must admit, however, that many languages are classed as genetically related on much less evidence than the above, and, as in the case of the Pacific Coast languages, we may have to base our conclusions on the minimum of evidence if we are to make progress. I believe that later it might be shown that the Chitimacha-Natchez may or may not be properly classified with another stock,—the Muskogean for instance.

ETHNOLOGY.

Physical anthropology.—In stature and corporal appearance the two tribes averaged closer resemblance than with any other. Craniometry is valueless as far as showing any tribal relationship among the Americans. The Chitimacha and Natchez have, however, a lower cephalic index and a higher facial angle than any other tribes of the lower Mississippi.

Migration legends.—The Chitimacha trace their origin from the “country of the Natchez.” On the other hand, the Natchez trace their origin from the Chitimacha country to their southwest. It may be that the Natchez migrated up the Mississippi from their primitive home, while the Chitimacha migrated southward. The Natchez speaking of the Chitimacha called them “their brothers,” and a well known friendship existed between the two tribes.

Religious customs.—Both the Natchez and Chitimacha worshiped the Noon-day Sun with a highly developed ritualism that was largely the same among the two peoples. The cere-

monies at the new moon, as well as the ceremonies in the temple, were also similar. Their beliefs, ceremonies and heirarchial system differed markedly from those of the Muskogean peoples. We also find the counterpart of the Natchez mortuary customs in those of the Chitimacha.

Social customs.—The Chitimacha in common with the Natchez had a highly developed system of classes which virtually amounted to a caste system not to be found among any of the other southern tribes. As far as recorded they agreed in having the same totemic gens. Descent was in the female line and the other features of social organization were not characteristic. We have no record, however, that either the Chitimacha or Natchez were divided into "peace" and "war" towns, as were the other southern tribes.

The amusements like the myths (so far as known) were much alike among all the southern tribes.

Conclusions.—I have shown that the Chitimacha and Natchez were phonetically and lexically the only languages of their region showing approximate similarity. This similarity is as great as could be expected for two languages supposedly of different stocks. The similarity is nearly as great as that existing between Creek and Choctaw, languages undoubtedly of familial relationship. While the accepted standard for ethnological classification is that of language, there are as strong proofs from migration legends, etc. It seems that lately collected Natchez linguistic material reflects a greater Muskogean influence than was formerly the rule: due to tribal influence (Mobilian trade jargon), adoption of part of the Natchez by the Creeks, etc. Therefore, I urge that the Chitimacha and Natchez be regarded as ethnically related, the latter having their language progressively more and more influenced by their Muskogean surroundings.



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